Fire Engine Rotating Brown-Out Plan

Summary and FAQs

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Currently 13 of the City's 47 fire stations house at least two crews at a time. Eleven house one engine (carries hose, water and pump) and one truck (carries ladders and equipment, but no extinguishment capability), one houses two engines and one truck, and one houses one engine and one heavy rescue unit (carries specialized rescue tools, but no extinguishment capability).

Under the rolling brown-out plan, these 13 stations will no longer house multiple crews permanently. Three will house one crew, as do the other 34 single-unit stations in our City and ten will house either two crews or one crew, alternating month to month. When a station goes from two crews to one, this is known as a brown-out. Under this plan no fire station will be closed.

Up to eight fire engines will be subject to brown-out each day. The firefighters displaced from these browned-out fire engines will be used to work in place of other firefighters who are absent from duty due to vacation, sick leave, injury, training or other department needs. This pool of available replacements will eliminate the need to hire firefighters back on overtime to fill these vacancies. This will result in approximately $11.5 million in budgetary savings from a reduction of overtime.

Frequently Asked Questions

When will this plan be implemented?

The plan will be implemented on February 6, 2010.

Why is a brown-out plan being implemented?

The brown-out plan is designed to achieve $11.5 million in budgetary savings within the Fire-Rescue Department as part of a City-wide budget reduction goal of $179 million for Fiscal Year 2011. Savings achieved in the current Fiscal Year (FY2010) will reduce the amount of savings required in FY2011.

How will the brown-out plan achieve budgetary savings?

Up to eight fire engines will be subject to brown-out (temporary closure) each day. The firefighters displaced from these browned-out fire engines will be used to work in place of other firefighters who are absent from duty due to vacation, sick leave, injury, training or other department needs. This pool of available replacements will reduce the need to hire firefighters back on overtime to fill these vacancies. The budgetary savings will come from a reduction of overtime expenditures.

Which fire stations are included in the brown-out plan and will any fire stations be closed?

No community fire station will be closed as a result of this brown-out plan. Only fire stations which have more than one emergency response unit assigned have been included in the plan. Thirteen of the City's 47 fire stations have more than one unit assigned. Only one of the two or more units in these stations will be browned-out. These participating fire stations are listed below:

Station 1 – Downtown	Station 4 – Downtown	Station 10- College
Station 11- Golden Hill	Station 12 – Lincoln Park	Station 14 – North Park
Station 20 – Midway	Station 21 – Pacific Beach	Station 28 – Kearny Mesa
Station 29 – San Ysidro	Station 35 – University City	Station 40 – Rancho Penasquitos
Station 44 – Mira Mesa		

Are any other fire stations impacted by the brown-out plan?

Fire Station 31 in Del Cerro and Fire Station 38 in Mira Mesa will also be impacted by the brown-out plan.

Fire Station 31 - One of two crews at Fire Station 10, which houses the department's field training program, will be moved to Fire Station 31 to allow these crews to continue providing post-academy training to the 33 firefighters that recently graduated. Fire Station 31's relatively close proximity to Fire Station 10 will allow the two crews to jointly train. The required training will take approximately one year to complete. At the conclusion of this training, this staffing decision will be reviewed.

Fire Station 38 – One of two crews at Fire Station 44, which houses the Hazardous Materials Team, will be moved to Fire Station 38 to allow these crews to provide Hazardous Materials emergency response services. Fire Station 38 is located approximately two miles west of Fire Station 44. The crew relocated to Fire Station 38 will serve as the secondary response HazMat crew and will be required to drive to Fire Station 44 each day to check and maintain the specialized hazardous materials equipment on the HazMat 2 vehicle. The HazMat 2 vehicle cannot be relocated to Fire Station 38 due to its size. The move to Fire Station 38 will be evaluated in 90 days to ensure that anticipated operational challenges have been mitigated. If these challenges cannot be overcome, another location for the HazMat2 crew will need to be identified.

Anticipated service level impacts at these two fire stations are response time delays associated with routine training or HazMat activities. In addition, both units may be out of their response districts or in an adjacent response district at times to facilitate training and HazMat activities. Lastly, Engine 38 will be placed out-of-service if the crew is needed to staff HazMat2 for a response. In this case, movement of another fire engine into this district to provide coverage will be considered.

How were the priorities determined for which of the 13 fire engines would be browned-out each day and in what order?

Five factors were taken into consideration:

(1) Average number of emergency incidents over a three-year period
(2) Response time differential for 2nd due unit
(3) Availability of surrounding fire stations to assist with emergency response coverage
(4) Avoidance of concurrent adjacent district brown-outs
(5) Special activities being conducted in fire stations

The first three factors were used to devise relative scores to determine the priority order in which fire engines should be browned-out; the higher the assigned score, the higher the priority for brown-out. These scores were then evaluated in light of the last two factors to determine if any adjustment in the priority order should be made. The table on the below lists the brown-out rotation group for each fire station, the analysis score, and the priority order for re-staffing.

Eight Unit Rolling Brown-out Plan						
A Group	A Group Re-staff Priority	A Group Point Score		B Group	B Group Re-Staff Priority	B Group Point Score
E44	8	90		E44	8	90
E40	7	90		E40	7	90
E10	6	75		E10	6	75
E11	5	80		E201	5	80
E20	4	80		E21	4	75
E14	3	75		E29	3	75
E28	2	70		E35	2	75
E4	1	70		E12	1	60

Which emergency response units in these fire stations will be subject to brown-out?

There are two principal types of emergency response vehicles used in the fire service, fire engines and fire trucks. Each vehicle has an important role to play in mitigating the variety of emergency incidents firefighters respond to each day. It is the fire engine that will be subject to brown-out.

Fire Engine - A fire engine is the smaller of the two vehicles. It carries fire hose, 500 gallons of water and a fire pump. Its main role at a fire is to provide extinguishment capability.

Fire Truck - A fire truck is a larger vehicle which carries ground ladders and specialized equipment. A fire truck can be easily distinguished from a fire engine by the presence of a large ladder located on top of the truck. A fire truck's main role at a fire is to provide for search and rescue, ventilation of smoke, control of utilities and salvage of building contents. Nine of 12 of the Fire-Rescue Department's trucks

have no extinguishment capability. The three that do will be placed at strategic locations to offset the brown-out of the fire engine in that community.

Both fire engines and fire trucks carry a paramedic and three emergency medical technicians and are equally capable of providing patient care at medical emergencies.

Why was it decided that fire engines would be browned-out rather than fire trucks?

With more fire engines (47) than fire trucks (12) located throughout the City, an engine covers a smaller geographic area than a truck. Consequently, another engine can more quickly respond to cover the district of a browned-out engine than another truck can cover the district of a browned-out truck.

While the vehicles types are not interchangeable, the fire trucks can provide all of the services provided by the fire engines, with the exception of fire extinguishment. Since only 3% of all emergency incidents are fires, it can be stated that a truck is capable of handling 97% of the incidents that an engine can handle. The reverse is not true. An engine does not carry the specialized equipment needed to handle the types of duties performed by a truck crew. Many of these duties at the scene of a fire are needed for the safety of occupants and firefighters.

How many fire engines will be browned-out each day?

Depending on the number of absent firefighters each day, from 1-8 fire engines may be browned-out.

How does the rotation portion of the brown-out plan work?

The rotation plan features two separate groups of fire stations. There are three fire stations that are members of both groups. Each of the two groups also list five separate fire stations. The two groups will be subject to brown-out on alternating months. These groups are shown below:

Groups	Eight Unit Brown-Out							
A Group	E44	E40	E10	E11	E20	E14	E28	E4
B Group	E44	E40	E10	E201	E21	E29	E35	E12

What types of service level impacts will occur as a result of the brown-out plan?

The brown-out of eight engines represents a 13% reduction in the City's daily firefighting force. This will mean that fewer fire units will be available to respond to the same number of requests for emergency service. This will likely result in increased response times in areas impacted by the brown-outs. Increased response times can result in poorer patient outcomes and increased fire spread and damage. Also, since some communities will not have a unit capable of extinguishing a fire, increased fire spread will occur while awaiting arrival of a fire engine from a more distant fire station.

In addition, the remaining response units in fire stations subject to engine brown-outs will be busier with emergency responses as will those fire stations in surrounding districts. This has a ripple effect across all fire stations as adjustments are made to ensure coverage. Increased emergency response activity will result in less time to perform non-emergency activities such as training, fire inspections, apparatus and equipment maintenance and pre-fire planning of target hazards.

Lastly, the use of the larger and heavier fire trucks to absorb the emergency response workloads of the browned-out engines will result in increased wear and tear on these vehicles and increased out-of-service times for maintenance and repairs.

Will the Fire-Rescue Department be required to report on response time and service level impacts?

The Fire-Rescue Department will be required to provide quarterly reports to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee of City Council.

Does the Fire Chief have the authority to adjust the plan once it is implemented?

Yes. This plan will be reviewed daily and adjustments made to ensure operational efficiency. In addition, the Fire Chief has authority to suspend the brown-out plan or re-staff any browned-out engines if current or anticipated emergency conditions warrant.

How long will the brown-out plan be in place?

It is not known how long the brown-out plan will be in place. At the time this budget reduction measure and others were developed, it was anticipated the reductions would remain in place until the City's fiscal situation improved to the point that restoration of these reductions was possible.

Are there any other California cities that have implemented a brown-out plan to achieve budgetary savings?

Fire departments in Gilroy, Lodi, Los Angeles City, Sacramento City and Santa Rosa have implemented similar plans. Several others have or are considering similar plans.

What will happen if the brown-out plan does not achieve the anticipated savings?

Failure to achieve the anticipated savings will result in a need to identify other sources of budgetary savings in the Fire-Rescue Department or in other City programs.